King answers questions from students and faculty in Cornell University's Straight Memorial Room on 15 November 1960 after delivering "The Dimensions of a Complete Life" at Sage Chapel. Excerpts from the session were published the following month in Dialogue, a Cornell student publication. King acknowledges that some in the black community "do not share my views about nonviolence because they do not think it is militant enough" but emphasizes that, despite differences in approach, "there can be unity when there isn't uniformity."

Question: Will the results of the recent election have any significance in the South?

Dr. King: We have seen something very significant in this election. Both parties had the strongest civil rights planks in their histories. Pressure in this nation and the current weight of world opinion will do a great deal to implement their programs. I have spoken to Senator Kennedy and I am very impressed with his grasp of the problem. I will be very disappointed if he does not take a forthright stand in this field. I am sure that we will have stronger action in his administration than we have had in the past eight years.

Question: When do you think integration will be realized in the South?

Dr. King: The struggle is to be a long and hard one and will continue until victory is won. If we continue to have the willingness to suffer and struggle creatively, integration will be a reality in the not-too-distant future I think we are beginning to see the end of the days of massive resistance in the South; by that I mean states saying that they will resist at any cost. They are beginning to see that this is a futile cause although many governors threaten to close the schools when they get an order to integrate. Little Rock taught us a lesson. Two powerful forces have collided in the South—the force of segregation and the force of public schools. By having these two institutions collide we have seen something very interesting. The people have made it clear that when the final choice approaches they will choose their schools open, with token integration, rather than closed schools. So I think that desegregation, which is not necessarily integration, will be a reality in most of the South, certainly the urban areas, in less

1. In a 4 April 1959 letter, Cornell president Deane W. Malott invited King to campus. Malott had suggested 22 November 1959, but King cited a scheduling conflict and proposed two alternative dates for November of the following year (King to Malott, 21 April 1959; for a similar address, see King, "The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life," 11 December 1960, pp. 571–579 in this volume).

2. In an effort to avoid desegregation orders, Little Rock high schools were closed during the 1958–1959 school year. A federal mandate reopened the schools in June 1959.
than ten or twelve years. And by desegregation I mean a breakdown of all legal barriers. Integration, we know, is more than breaking down legal barriers; it is true interpersonal, intergroup living which takes place not because the law says so, but because it is natural and right. This will take a lot longer, but we are moving in the right direction, and we are very hopeful about the future. I hope that we will see true integration before the turn of the century.

**Question:** Is there any real disunity in the Negro community about the current struggle

**Dr. King:** You can never stand in a position of leadership without opposition. My attitude is that this can sometimes be healthy because it keeps you in a constant state of examining your self, your motives and methods. I always try to take criticism in a positive sense. I have not faced any vocal opposition in the Negro community. Some do not share my views about nonviolence because they do not think it is militant enough, but there is no real disunity. There can be unity when there isn’t uniformity.

**Question:** What influenced your nonviolent approach and how is it implemented?

**Dr. King:** I cam to the philosophy of nonviolence as a way of life after a careful study of Mahatma Gandhi and other social philosophers. Of course, my whole religious background had something to do with it. The whole spirit of nonviolence came to me from Jesus of Nazareth. Its central idea is that you counteract an unjust system through direct action and love your opponents at the same time. You implement the philosophy through sit-ins and boycotts. You hope to be able to bring an end to your opponent’s self-defeating massacre and that he will change his attitude.

**Question:** What can Northern students do to help integration?

**Dr. King:** All students should fight discriminatory barriers wherever they face them in their communities. The best way to help in the South is to make sure there is no discrimination in the North. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Northern students can relate themselves to the Southern struggle by participating in sympathetic protest movements. One of the most encouraging developments in helping the sit-ins in the South has been the hundreds of students in the North who have joined in sympathetic protest to inform the chain variety stores that they need to have a unified program throughout the nation. I am sure that these demonstrations helped a great deal, along with the demonstrations in the South, to bring about desegregation in more than one hundred twelve cities within the past five months. Students in the North can also give very important financial support.